

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Statement from Director Dan Ashe – Passage of the END Wildlife Trafficking Act

On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I want to thank Congress for giving final approval to the Eliminate, Neutralize and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act, which was signed into law by the President. In particular, we owe a great debt of gratitude to House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce, Ranking Member Eliot Engel, Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Chris Coons, and Africa and Global Health Policy Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Flake for their leadership in securing passage of this important bipartisan legislation.

Across the globe, we face an unprecedented wave of poaching and wildlife trafficking that is decimating wild populations of some of the world's most beloved species, including elephants, rhinos and tigers. Time is running out for the world to halt the killing and save wild populations of these and hundreds of other species. The United States, as one of the world's largest markets and a central hub for transshipments of wildlife products – legal and illegal – has taken a leadership role in this fight.

The END Wildlife Trafficking Act is a further demonstration of that leadership, and of our nation's determination to crack down on poaching and wildlife trafficking here and abroad. It advances the goals of the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking by making certain significant wildlife trafficking crimes predicate offenses for money laundering charges, giving our law enforcement Special Agents desperately needed new tools in the fight against the sophisticated criminal organizations masterminding the current slaughter. We want to thank the sponsors of this legislation for including this provision and applaud Senators Dianne Feinstein and Lindsey Graham for their work on it as well. The Act also focuses attention on current trafficking hotspots and authorizes support for law enforcement training, investigative capacity building, range state conservation programs, and other important tools to protect and sustain wild populations of imperiled species in Latin America, Asia, Africa and other critical locations. It represents a significant step forward, and we are grateful to Congress for acting to protect the world's wildlife.